

LEPG Instructional Feedback Observation Protocol

Introduction

Principals and other school-level administrators create conditions for better teaching and learning to occur in schools by allocating resources, putting programs and procedures in place, and working directly with teachers. One way that school-level administrators influence teaching is by providing teachers feedback on instructional quality during performance evaluation procedures. We call this **instructional feedback**. Researchers note that, when done well, feedback can motivate people to learn and improve professional performance. Effective instructional feedback is a critical practice for principals to master.

The Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) Leader Evaluation and Professional Growth (LEPG) system assesses school-level leaders' performance as teacher evaluators. MSFE has adopted the American Institutes for Research (AIR) instructional feedback observation instrument for assessing instructional feedback quality. AIR has provided the observation protocol and toolkit for use by MSFE educators, after extensive content validation. When combined with other evidence, observation results will assist supervisors to evaluate principal effectiveness on **Core Proposition 4. Teaching and Learning**, specifically:

- **Standard Indicator 4.3** Supporting Instructional Practice: The leader supports improvement of teacher practice through evidence-based, actionable feedback and access to quality professional development.

Supervisors should consider observation results, artifact review (e.g., review of school improvement plan progress), school climate survey information, and other evidence to form a **holistic assessment** of principal performance and select the corresponding performance level on the LEPG Rubric. *All* principals, regardless of experience level or school level, will be observed at least twice per year, as is the requirement of the Teacher Incentive Fund grant. Both observations contribute to principals' final performance assessment.

This observation protocol provides an overview of the observation process, and it is used for training and reference. Principal supervisors also will have access to observation coaches to support efficient, systematic implementation of the observation tool. A second, smaller booklet (the "toolkit") contains the instruments that you will need for completing the observations.

Principals schedule postobservation conferences with teachers as part of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth (TEPG) program. During postobservation conferences, principals discuss classroom observation results, teachers' progress toward implementing the school's instructional framework, and plans for instructional improvement. Supervisors will observe principals providing instructional feedback in this postobservation setting. After principal supervisors gather observation evidence, the supervisors will be responsible for sharing observation results with principals, giving them feedback on performance, and considering the observation evidence in scoring the principal on the LEPG Rubric. Feedback sessions should reflect MSFE training on the effective principal observation and practices outlined in this protocol.

Overview of the Protocol

Instructional feedback observations will occur when principals provide teachers performance feedback during one-on-one conferences. Principal observation is a five-step observation process, which ends with an assessment of principals' performance as teacher evaluators. Managing the observation process is critical for principals and supervisors. The amount of time will vary by principal need; in general, supervisors should allow two hours per observation cycle.

The observation protocol is specifically designed for observing principals when they are conducting a postobservation conference with teachers. The instrument should not be used to make observations in other contexts (e.g., faculty meetings, walkthroughs, brief one-off feedback). There are other protocols available for these observations.

The Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric

The **Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric** describes key practices and performance levels for principals' feedback to teachers (see Figure 1). The accompanying *Toolkit* contains the full rubric. Evaluators will use the rubric to rate performance by drawing upon evidence gathered during the feedback observation and will share scores on the rubric with principals. Principals also can use the rubric as a self-reflection tool. The rubric answers questions such as the following:

- What does good instructional feedback look like?
- What is the difference between instructional feedback that seems to generate no change and instructional feedback that leads to steady improvements in teacher practice?
- What effective practices do instructional leaders use in generating collaborative, productive conversations with teachers about their performance?

The rubric translates these practices into five observation indicators (see Figure 1) that are described across four levels of performance (ineffective, developing, effective, and distinguished).

Figure 1. Key Principal Practices: Five Observation Indicators



The Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric presents four levels of performance. The levels of performance are the parallel in each of the five indicators. The levels of performance are as follows:

1. **Ineffective.** The principal demonstrates the *practices and behaviors that are minimally necessary* to provide teachers with useful instructional feedback.
2. **Developing.** The principal demonstrates basic levels of proficiency and a *partial command of the practices and behaviors* necessary to provide teachers with useful instructional feedback.
3. **Effective.** The principal demonstrates basic levels of proficiency and a *full command of the core practices and behaviors* necessary to provide teachers with useful instructional feedback.
4. **Distinguished.** The principal demonstrates a *full command of the core practices and behaviors* necessary for providing teachers with useful instructional feedback and demonstrates *additional practices and behaviors* to ensure that teachers receive the support necessary to improve their instruction and achieve professional goals.

The Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric is different from the MSFE LEPG Rubric. The LEPG Rubric was written to describe broad categories of principal practice. The Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric contains very specific behaviors and practices. Supervisors will gather multiple sources of evidence to create a general assessment of principal performance. Observation evidence is one of several evidence sources that supervisors should review when scoring principals on the LEPG Rubric (see Model LEPG Guide for overview of sources of evidence).

The Observation Process

The following sections provide a detailed overview of the five-step principal observation process.

Figure 2. Overview of the Principal Observation Process

Prepare

- **Complete** principal observation training.
- **Calibrate** ratings of principal observations.
- **Review** the observation process and rating rubric.
- **Schedule** observations with principals by getting teacher consent to observe

Collect

- **Explain** your role to the principal and teacher.
- **Use** the interactive PDF form or video capture to record what principals say, what teachers say, and what information is used during postobservation conferences.
- **Collect** teacher evaluation documents.

Analyze

- **Review** the observation and teacher evaluation documents as evidence for the five performance feedback areas.
- **Use** the rubric to assess principal performance by circling the appropriate level.
- **As appropriate**, ask the principal to rate his or her performance according to the scoring rubric.

Discuss

- **Schedule** a postobservation conference with the principal.
- **Ask** the principal to share the self-assessment information.
- **Share** observation results with the principal and discuss the evidence.
- **Identify** areas of strength and needs for improvement.

Rate and Plan

- **Consider** observation scores with other evidence on principal performance when completing the LEPG Rubric.
- **Use** the professional development planning document to create a plan for performance improvement by capitalizing on strengths and addressing lower scores.

1. Prepare

Observing instructional feedback requires that teachers, principals, and supervisors be fully informed about observations and understand the purpose of the observation. It is particularly important that teachers understand that supervisors will be **observing principals' work** and are not evaluating teachers' work.

Before supervisors begin observations, they should complete the following steps:

- **Arrange a time to observe the principal in a teacher evaluation postobservation meeting** during which the principal provides evaluation results and instructional feedback to an individual teacher.
- **Dedicate 45 minutes** of time for observing the feedback session. The typical teacher feedback meeting lasts 30 minutes, and you may wish to allocate 15 additional minutes for reviewing forms and checking schedules prior to the observation.
- **Schedule a 20-minute, postconference** for each observation with the principal to share feedback about him or her.
- **Orient the principal** to the observation and evaluation procedures.
- **Explain** the focus of observations to teachers and principals in advance.
- **Review all training materials prior to the observation.** If questions arise, supervisors should call Scott Harrison, MSFE project director.
- **Before the meeting begins**, complete basic information about the context of the observation in the appropriate section of the form.

Materials Required

- ✓ Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric (Toolkit)
- ✓ LEPG Instructional Feedback Observation Form—Preobservation Conversation
- ✓ Principal's job description

Remember:
Do not surprise the principal and teacher by showing up unexpectedly to observe a teacher evaluation meeting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Principals should have the opportunity to conduct coaching sessions confidentially. The information collected by the evaluator should not be available to anyone except the principal. Similarly, the collection of teacher evaluation data as part of the evaluator's observation of the principal and teacher is confidential and is used only to give formative feedback to the principal.

The teacher is a participant in the coaching session and is not being evaluated; the evaluator's rating of the principal's performance during the teacher evaluation meeting should never be used to influence a teacher's evaluation results.

2. Collect

Recording accurate information is essential in a performance evaluation. The more detailed the evidence, the more accurate and legally defensible it is. Supervisors will complete a written “running record” of meetings or will video-record meetings.

Completing the Data Collection Form

If supervisors are creating written running records of meetings, then they can use the Data Collection Form or another document.

When collecting evidence, supervisors should:

Materials Required

- ✓ Running Record Note-Taking Form (Toolkit)
- ✓ Teacher Evaluation Data

- **Position themselves in a place where they can clearly see the principal, the teacher, and their interaction with evaluation materials.** Supervisors should avoid sitting so close to the principal or teacher that they become part of the feedback session.
- **Create a running record of the interaction or otherwise record the interactions.** For the running record, supervisors should describe what the principal says, what the teacher says, and what information is used during the evaluation.
- **Describe any relevant outcomes of the observation session** such as any follow-up actions taken by the principal or the teacher.
- **Collect copies of the postobservation forms or documentation** used during the meeting. Behavioral indicators 1 and 5 require you to assess how the principal has used observation evidence and student data in communicating feedback and in explaining ratings (as appropriate) to the teacher.
- **Return to notes immediately after the observation session.**
- Write the narrative summary of the observation session soon after the session.
- Table 2. Example: Running Record Note-Taking Form

Table 2. Example: Running Record Note-Taking Form

Time	Principal Says...	Teacher Says....	Materials Used
1:04	<p>Points to a printed copy of the T's evaluation: "For planning and preparation, I have you rated you as proficient in all areas."</p> <p>Says: T has been "fired up" during the preconference about his plans to have students develop their own rubric for the first time.</p> <p>"This was risky to attempt when you have an outside observer in the classroom at the same time."</p> <p>"By the way, how did that go? How did that evolve?"</p>	<p>Task was presented to 2 classes and spanned 2 periods for each of the classes.</p> <p>Students put a rubric together, including "the meat inside the rubrics."</p> <p>Combined the rubrics from the two classes into one combined rubric. "They [the students] liked it. They were...participating a lot. It's going to be their grades, their expectations they have to fulfill. So definitely there was interest on their part in the development."</p>	<p>Evaluation form</p> <p>Combined student rubric</p>
1:10	<p>"There's inherent motivation into really thinking about all the components of the rubric, because they [the students] know they're going to be evaluated on it, on that instrument."</p> <p>"When you combined the rubrics from the two classes, first of all, tell me why you combined them."</p>		
1:15		<p>T explains: "The areas that they [the students] gave and the examples they gave of what's a 1 or what's a 2, what's a 4, were, except for 1 or 2 words, were the same."</p> <p>The teacher concluded with the statement, "So it went well."</p>	

3. Analyze

Supervisors should analyze the observational data soon after it is collected by (1) highlighting evidence pertaining to the six indicators and (2) rating the principal on the five behavioral indicators by using the Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric. The following steps will help supervisors analyze the data:

Tips

- **Analyze soon after observing.**
- **Keep a copy of the “Quick Reference: Observation Indicators” page from the *Toolkit* handy.**

Materials Required

- ✓ Running Record Notes (Toolkit)
- ✓ Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric
- ✓ Teacher Evaluation Data

Analysis

- **Review materials.** Before making observation-specific performance ratings, start by reviewing all relevant materials (the running record notes, preobservation meeting notes, and teacher evaluation data).
- **Use the markup functions in a word processor to code observation notes.** Table 3 demonstrates multiple approaches for coding: (1) code the text by using the highlight feature and changing the default color to match the corresponding tab color for the relevant indicator or (2) by typing the number of the indicator in brackets—[2]—after the sentence or phrase. Other options are possible, and you may choose according to your personal preferences.
- **Score against the rubric.** After coding is complete, supervisors should review the evidence and determine the performance level according to the descriptions in Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric.

Table 3. Example: Running Record Note-Taking Form With Coding

Time	Principal Says...	Teacher Says....	Materials Used
1:04	<p>Points to a printed copy of the T's evaluation: "For planning and preparation, I have you rated you as proficient in all areas."</p> <p>Says: T has been "fired up" during the preconference about his plans to have students develop their own rubric for the first time.</p> <p>"This was risky to attempt when you have an outside observer in the classroom at the same time." [2]</p> <p>"By the way, how did that go? How did that evolve?" [3]</p>	<p>Task was presented to 2 classes and spanned 2 periods for each of the classes.</p> <p>Students put a rubric together, including "the meat inside the rubrics."</p> <p>Combined the rubrics from the two classes into one combined rubric. "They [the students] liked it. They were...participating a lot. It's going to be their grades, their expectations they have to fulfill. So definitely there was interest on their part in the development."</p>	<p>Evaluation form</p> <p>Combined student rubric</p>
1:10	<p>"There's inherent motivation into really thinking about all the components of the rubric, because they [the students] know they're going to be evaluated on it, on that instrument." [2]</p> <p>"When you combined the rubrics from the two classes, first of all, tell me why you combined them." [3]</p>		
1:15		<p>T explains: "The areas that they [the students] gave and the examples they gave of what's a 1 or what's a 2, what's a 4, were, except for 1 or 2 words, were the same."</p> <p>The teacher concluded with the statement, "So it went well."</p>	

4. Discuss

A 30-minute postobservation conference should be scheduled with each principal. The following steps will assist supervisors in giving formative feedback to principals:

- **Prior to the postconference, review coded observation notes and ratings on the Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric** to identify performance strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Prior to the postconference, the principal receives a copy of the Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric and completes his or her self-assessment.**
- **Convene the postobservation conference.** The supervisor and principal engage in the feedback process.
- **Record a final rating for the observation.** The supervisor makes a decision on the final rating for the observation at the end of the postobservation conference and communicates this to the principal.

Materials Required

- ✓ Running record notes
- ✓ Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric
- ✓ Teacher evaluation data
- ✓ Principal's self-evaluation (optional)
- ✓ LEPG Instructional Feedback Observation Form—Postobservation Conversation

5. Rate and Plan

The crucial, final step of the observation cycle is creating a plan for performance improvement and using observations to inform scoring on the MSFE LEPG Rubric, specifically **Core Proposition 4. Teaching and Leading, indicator 4.3. Supporting Instructional Practice**. These two final steps are briefly discussed in this section.

MSFE requests that all principal supervisors convene a professional development planning (PDP) meeting with each principal to set a professional development plan that reflects the performance evaluation ratings. MSFE provides supervisors and principals with professional development planning forms for this purpose. When completing the PDP forms, supervisors and principals should consider observation evidence and the ratings resulting from the instructional feedback observation process.

Materials Required

- ✓ Running record notes
- ✓ Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric, Observation Rating Summary section
- ✓ Teacher evaluation data





The MSFE LEPG Rubric uses “holistic scoring,” which means that supervisors must consider all collected evidence when assessing principal performance. Observation evidence should contribute to holistic scoring of principals, along with survey data, and other appropriate evidence. To complete the LEPG Rubric, Indicator 4.3, supervisors should consider this evidence, as well as *all* principal observations completed during the academic year and the two final ratings on the Instructional Feedback Observation Rubric recorded in the Observation Rating Summary section of the Toolkit.

Suggested Guidance on Scoring for LEPG Rubric, Standard Indicator 4.3

When rating Standard Indicator 4.3, supervisors should review the evidence and ratings recorded for each of the two instructional feedback observations. Although supervisors should exercise professional judgment in deciding a final, observation score, to promote consistency and fairness across MSFE districts, we recommend the following scoring approach. MSFE districts should feel free to modify or adjust this scoring approach as best fits their district needs. It is not a required element of the MSFE LEPG model.

- **Step 1.** Average the two final observation scores to create a final, single observation score.
- **Step 2.** Use Table 4. LEPG Scoring Alignment, to select an initial, preliminary score for Standard Indicator 4.3.
- **Step 3.** Analyze other evidence applicable to Standard Indicator 4.3, such as 360 degree feedback, and adjust the preliminary score to reflect this additional evidence, and then record a final score for the indicator.

Table 4. Suggested LEPG Scoring Alignment

Final Observation Score	0 or 1 	1.5 or 2 	2.5 or 3 	3.5 or 4 
Preliminary LEPG Score for 4.3	Ineffective (1)	Developing (2)	Effective (3)	Distinguished (4)